

Seven Myths About the Vietnam War

by William F. Jasper

Three decades after pulling out of Southeast Asia, America remains hostage to a relentless barrage of distortion, myths, and outright lies about the Vietnam War.

Myth #1: The United States was defeated militarily in Southeast Asia.

Myth #2: The impact of the Pentagon's Rules of Engagement on our military capabilities in Vietnam has been greatly exaggerated.

Myth #3: The North Vietnamese (Communists) won, ultimately, because they occupied the moral high ground. They were fighting for their homeland against a foreign invader.

Myth #4: The Vietnamese who fought against us were more nationalists than Communists. However, the Communists were willing to help them free their country from the French - and later, American - invaders.

Myth #5: Claims by conservatives and the military that media coverage of the Vietnam War was unbalanced, hostile toward the military, or even anti-patriotic and subversive are not substantiated by the facts. Many scholarly studies have shown that the media coverage, on the whole, was fair and accurate.

Myth #6: It was America's pathological anti-Communist obsession that caused our leaders to get us involved in the Vietnam quagmire.

Myth # 7: All of America's POWs were returned following the 1973 peace agreement, and Vietnam is now cooperating to find the remains of all the unresolved MIAs.



Napoleon is reputed to have cynically remarked that "history is a fraud agreed upon."¹ A similarly cynical attitude is more than justified when it comes to the usual "history" of the Vietnam War, as presented by the prevailing liberal-left voices of the mass media, academia, and Hollywood. For the past four decades, the American public has been subjected to a relentless barrage of distortion, propaganda, myths, and outright lies concerning the war in Southeast Asia that claimed the lives of 58,000 of America's sons and left hundreds of thousands of others physically and psychologically wounded.

While many Americans, especially those under the age of 40, view the Vietnam War era as ancient history, the ghost of Vietnam is still very much with us, greatly affecting our culture, our beliefs, and our political, social, and military policies. Innumerable journalists, commentators, activist professors, politicians, novelists, and historians have stolen the truth and substituted the most contemptible lies. Consider, for example, the late, celebrated historian Henry Steele Commager. Author of many influential books and articles and an activist in many Communist front organizations and radical-left groups, Mr. Commager aggressively denounced U.S. military actions in Indochina and regularly distorted the facts concerning what was happening during the war.² His distortions did not stop once the U.S. had pulled out of Vietnam. In 1998, for instance, he wrote the introduction to Loren Baritz's book, *Backfire: A History of how American Culture Led Us into Vietnam and Made Us Fight the Way We Did*. Commager praised this anti-American propaganda assault as "the first full-length and scholarly account of why we got into Vietnam in the first place, why we fought it as barbarously as the Japanese in Manchuria or the Germans in Poland, and why we deserved to lose it - indeed why we did have to lose it if we were to find any kind of ultimate peace."³

Incredible! Can the overall performance of American troops in Vietnam truly be compared to the brutal rape of Nanking by the Imperial Japanese invaders of China or the atrocities of Hitler's forces in Poland? Such an obscene defamation of America's armed forces - of America's sons, fathers, grandfathers, and husbands - so blatantly contradicts the facts as to seem possible only from the hand of an enemy propagandist. Yet, this abominable screed came from one of our country's most highly praised historians. Many other prominent academics, journalists, commentators, and politicians share Mr. Commager's distorted views and have propagated them in the minds of millions of unsuspecting Americans. In what follows, we hope to inject some truth into the poisonous smokescreen that has clouded popular thinking and discussion concerning the Vietnam War.

Myth #1: The United States was defeated militarily in Southeast Asia.

Response: This, one of the most persistent and widely believed falsehoods, is refuted by overwhelming evidence and unimpeachable authorities. Virtually all military experts agree that America was never militarily defeated in Vietnam; we "lost" the war because of unconscionable political decisions that tied the hands of our fighting forces and *prevented* them from winning. General Curtis LeMay, a pioneer in the use of strategic bombing during World War II and chief of staff of the U.S. Air Force from 1961 until his retirement in 1965, said in 1968: "The only reason American soldiers are bleeding and dying in Vietnam today is because our leaders have tied their hands behind their backs. The only reason we haven't had victory in Vietnam is because our leaders have done everything possible to avoid it."⁴

Gen. LeMay continued:

This last bombing halt is the sorriest thing I ever saw. I can't see any difference in this bombing halt than any of the others. The Communists have used every lull to resupply their troops and get ready for increased activity. Every time our fighting men have hit them hard, the politicians give them a chance to recover. And this only leads to increased casualties for our own troops.⁵



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Deception and treachery:

During his 1964 campaign for re-election, President Lyndon B Johnson (**left**) proclaimed: "We are not about to send American boys 9,000 or 10,000 miles away from home to do what Asian boys ought to be doing to protect themselves." But at that very time, he was making plans with Defense Secretary Robert Strange McNamara (**below**) to move hundreds of thousands of American boys into a war in Vietnam. They then shackled our warriors with Rules of Engagement that insured a protracted conflict with mounting casualties.



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North Vietnam.... Never, in American experience, have the lessons of air warfare, of all warfare, been so pointedly ignored. And never before has an air campaign been controlled, in detail, from thousands of miles away.⁹



Needless deaths: General Curtis LeMay, chief of staff of the U.S. Air Force, stated in 1968: "The only reason American soldiers are bleeding and dying in Vietnam today is because our leaders have tied their hands behind their backs."

General Paul D. Harkins, commanding general of U.S. forces in Vietnam, stated: "The faster you move in a war, the fewer casualties there are, and the sooner the fighting is over. This war could be won in less than three months, but not the way it is being fought now."⁶

Major General Raymond G. Davis, a Medal of Honor recipient in the Korean War and commander of the 3rd Marine Division in Vietnam, was a disciple of the legendary Marine General Lewis "Chesty" Puller. "I kept remembering that the Puller outlook on war was one of total dedication to the proposition that you go out and find the enemy or guerrilla and destroy him," General Davis said of his experience in Vietnam. "He never once thought about trying to protect an area or strong point and displacing people or winning hearts and minds. All that was secondary. I really believe that if we had started with that premise in Vietnam, it would have been over very quickly. Instead we ended up in total disaster."⁷

"Anyone who believes that American fighting men were defeated in Vietnam is wrong; they were defeated at home," says author W.T. Grant, in *Wings of the Eagle*. Grant, one of those brave helicopter pilots who regularly flew into the jaws of death (in the 17th Assault Helicopter Company) angrily records that "we were fighting with our hands tied behind our backs."⁸

Likewise, Colonel Jack Broughton, one of our valiant F-105 fighter pilots who flew many dangerous missions over North Vietnam, stated:

Never in the history of human conflict have so many hampered, limited, and mis-controlled so few as in the air campaign against

Are the views expressed above those of a few disgruntled dissidents? Hardly. They expressed what was virtually the unanimous opinion of America's best military minds and most experienced officers. Among the many exhibits we could

offer to prove this point is the March 1968 issue of *Science & Mechanics*. That issue featured a very important article by editor Lloyd Mallan, based on his extensive interviews with a score of top-ranking military leaders. Here are the conclusions of these leaders:

The war against North Vietnam can be irrevocably won in six weeks.... The remaining Vietcong guerrillas in the South could be conquered within six months.... [The war] may go on for another five, ten or more years - if it continues to be fought as at present.... We are fighting a war in a weak-sister manner that is unprecedented throughout the history of military science.¹⁰

Who were these military leaders *unanimously* protesting that our fighting men were being hobbled and needlessly sacrificed in a war that could be won, conventionally, in six weeks? They included: General Nathan F. Twining, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Admiral Arleigh A. Burke, former chief of naval operations; General George H. Decker, former Army chief of staff; General Frederick H. Smith Jr., former vice chief of staff, Air Force; General Thomas S. Power, former commander in chief, Strategic Air Command; Lieutenant General Ira C. Eaker, former vice chief of staff, Air Force; and Lieutenant General Arthur G. Trudeau, former Army chief of research and development.¹¹ Such unanimity from men of their stature and experience is not a matter of politics: It amounts to the nearest thing one can imagine to a military certainty. The war *could have been* won, and in six weeks. It was not won because the commander in chief, President Lyndon Johnson, and his advisors (McNamara, Rusk, Bundy, Rostow, Ball, Harriman, et al.) would not *permit* the military to win it.

It is not merely the military experts' *opinion* that victory was possible in Vietnam; they proved it numerous times by their actions, utterly routing the Vietnamese Communist forces.

When briefly set free from the restrictions placed on his Marines by LBJ's Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, General Ray Davis' troops kicked tail. Davis was especially aggrieved that the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) had 162 cannons that were able to pound his men any time the enemy decided to and that he was not allowed to do anything about it. Soon after he was turned loose, his artillery batteries had knocked out all of the enemy cannons, captured 3,500 of their rockets, and destroyed their army divisions.¹² Said Davis: "Once those divisions were destroyed and we had seized all their bases, we were able to destroy the Main Force regiments of the Vietcong that were supported by the North Vietnamese Army. Then we were able to go into the villages and get the Vietcong out. Eventually we had total pacification.... The guerrillas can only work when they are supported by main forces; the only way to get guerrillas is to destroy main forces and their bases of support."¹³

One of the things General Davis' Marines had to deal with was the image of "the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army troops that the media presented as outstanding fighters, invincible jungle fighters who could slip silently through the jungle wearing only black pajamas and rubber tire sandals."¹⁴

"In Quang Tri Province we took this 'giant' from eleven feet tall down to a midget," says Davis. "He just didn't exist when we finished with him. Again, because we soon learned how to apply our superior mobility, flexibility, and fire power, he had no way of defending himself, as hard as he tried and as determined as he was.... Everywhere he went, he found Marines on top of the hills coming down after his forces, which soon got scattered. He lost contact with them. He couldn't shoot his artillery because he didn't know where his troops were, so on and so on, just totally unable to operate against not our numerically superior forces, but our superior equipment, superior doctrine, superior fire power and mobility. A lesson to be learned from the enemy in a positive sense, sure, he had a great ability to survive, to dig in, to endure great hardships, but our people can do all of these things even better if they have to."¹⁵

General Davis insisted that "it is important to expose the fact that our defeat in Vietnam was a political one and not a military one, because as far as I'm concerned, my Marines in Quang Tri proved to me and proved to anybody who came to take a look that we could easily destroy the enemy forces which could not stand up to us at all. It was a one-sided, one-way affair and we were on top."¹⁶ Other Army, Navy, Marine, and Air Force units experienced similar success when freed from the incredibly restrictive and immoral "rules of engagement" that were imposed on our fighting forces.

One of the most extraordinary examples of disinformation concerns the Communists' Tet Offensive of January 1968. The Communists were overwhelmingly defeated in this operation, but the press transformed the defeat into a Communist victory. The Communists themselves say so. Take, for just one example, the Vietcong's former minister of justice, Truong Nhu Tang. According to Tang:

Tet proved catastrophic to our plans. It cost us half our forces. Our propaganda transformed the military debacle into a brilliant victory.¹⁷

"Tet was a *huge* defeat for the Communists," says Col. Bill Davis, author of *TET Marine*, whose Marine battalion was guarding Da Nang Airbase. "We knew they were coming because our patrols had not found any booby traps for 48 hours before," he told THE NEW AMERICAN. "So we were waiting and we *waxed* 'em. We were the defenders and they were

just coming in waves to be killed. It was the first time they had come out in the open, so it was much nicer for us than going into the jungle after them. It was a devastating loss of men for them, but the fact that they launched the attack simultaneously in 68 towns impressed [CBS News anchorman] Walter Cronkite. And he and the rest of the media declared that Tet was a crushing defeat for our side. The reporting was appalling."¹⁸

There were some in the major media who recognized just *how* appalling and wrong the coverage had been and wanted to do something to correct it. In an article for *TV Guide* of October 6, 1973, Edward Jay Epstein wrote:

In late 1968, Jack Fern, a field producer for NBC, suggested to Robert J. Northshield a three-part series showing that Tet had indeed been a decisive military victory for America and that the media had exaggerated greatly the view that it was a defeat for South Vietnam. After some consideration the idea was rejected because, Northshield said later, Tet was already "established in the public's mind as a defeat, and therefore it *was* an American defeat."¹⁹

Myth #2: The impact of the Pentagon's Rules of Engagement on our military capabilities in Vietnam has been greatly exaggerated.

Response: It is hardly possible to exaggerate the deleterious impact that the politically imposed Rules of Engagement (ROE) exerted, both on the actual military performance and on the morale of our forces. In fact, the political powers that be - in both Democrat and Republican administrations - understood well that the restrictions imposed on our forces were so clearly unreasonable and immoral that the American public would be totally outraged if they found out about them. So the rules were classified, and our troops and commanders were ordered not to mention them. It was 1985, ten years after the Communist takeover of Vietnam, before Senator Barry Goldwater succeeded in obtaining their declassification. The Rules of Engagement consumed 26 pages of the *Congressional Record* (March 6, 14, and 18, 1985). Summarizing some of the most outrageous curbs on our military, Goldwater said:

These layers of restrictions, which were constantly changing and were almost impossible to memorize or understand, although it was required of our pilots, granted huge sanctuary areas to the enemy. When certain limits would at last be removed after repeated appeals by the Joint Chiefs, the reductions were made only in gradual steps and seldom were strong enough to serve our strategic ends. Numerous partial and total bombing halts interrupted the effectiveness of earlier bombing campaigns. Often, when limited extensions of target areas were granted, they were unexpectedly canceled and withdrawn shortly afterward. What were some of the rules?

- SAM missile sites could not be bombed while they were under construction, but only after they became operational.
- Pilots were not permitted to attack a Communist MiG sitting on the runway. The only time it could be attacked was after it was in the air, had been identified, and had showed hostile intentions. Even then, its base could not be bombed.
- Military truck depots located just over 200 yards from a road could not be destroyed. Enemy trucks on a road could be attacked, but if they drove off the road they were safe from bombing.
- If a South Vietnamese forward air controller was not on an aircraft, it was forbidden to bomb enemy troops during a fire fight even though the Reds were clearly visible and were being pointed at by an officer on the ground. The aircraft's bombs were dumped in the ocean.²⁰

In 1972, Major General John D. Lavelle was relieved of his command of the 7th Air Force in Vietnam for protecting his men against imminent attack from Soviet jets being positioned in sanctuaries just across the border in North Vietnam. News accounts reported that General Lavelle ordered strikes against the enemy bases "after his pilots saw and photographed a five-month buildup of Soviet-built MIG jet fighters at three airfields just across the demilitarized zone, along with SAM missile sites, heavy 133-mm artillery guns, anti-aircraft guns and tanks."²¹

General Lavelle stated:

At that time, as commander on the spot concerned with the safety of my men and at the same time trying to stop the buildup that was being made for Hanoi's invasion of the South, I felt that these were justifiable actions.²²

In his testimony before the House Armed Services Subcommittee, General Lavelle said of his actions: "If I had it to do over I would do the same thing again."²³ Incredibly, during the same week that Lavelle was recalled, the North Vietnamese launched a major offensive against South Vietnam, prompting President Nixon to suspend the rules Lavelle had been accused of violating. Nixon then ordered tactical air strikes against some of the same targets Lavelle had singled out.²⁴

Major General Frederick C. "Boots" Blesse, a flying ace of both the Korean and Vietnam Wars, said of the ROE in Vietnam:

We had a lot of restrictions under which we fought the war. One week you could hit a target, the next week it was on the no-no list. If you were on a mission to Hanoi and saw a train or other target of opportunity, you had to let it go – no authorization. We had to watch the first SAM sites being built, and couldn't strike them because there might be some Russians helping to build the site. Our feeling was if you kill the site early, you'll never have to take on more than one at a time. If you wait, they will build a ring of them, and while you are attacking one, another will be firing at you. If there was Russians there, it was because they chose to be. They should have to take the same chances we take for helping another country.²⁵

"I was always taught as an officer that in a pursuit situation you continue to pursue until you either kill the enemy or he surrenders," said General Harry W.O. Kinnard, commanding general of the 1st Cavalry Division, echoing the frustration of virtually every American officer in Vietnam. "Not to follow them into Cambodia violated every principle of warfare.... It became perfectly clear to the North Vietnamese that they then had sanctuary; they could come when they were ready to fight and leave when they were ready to quit."²⁶ Kinnard continued:

When [Communist North Vietnamese] General Giap says he learned how to fight Americans and our helicopters at the Ia Drang, that's bulls***! What he learned was that we were not going to be allowed to chase him across a mythical line in the dirt. From that point forward, he was grinning. He can bring us to battle when he wants and where he wants, and where's that? Always within a few miles of the border where his supply lines were the shortest, where the preponderance of forces is his, where he has scouted the terrain intensely and knows it better than we do.²⁷

"The Ia Drang had plenty of water for drinking and for cooking rice," recalls Lieutenant General Harold G. Moore in his Vietnam War bestseller, *We Were Soldiers Once ... and Young*. "Best of all, for the PAVN [People's Army of Vietnam], was its location on the border with Cambodia. The Vietnamese Communists came and went across the border at will; we were prohibited from crossing it."²⁸ "We knew for a fact," says Moore, "that the three North Vietnamese regiments that we had fought in the Ia Drang had withdrawn into Cambodia. We wanted to follow them in hot pursuit, on the ground and in the air, but we could not do so under the rules of engagement. Washington had just answered one very important question in the minds of Hanoi's leaders."²⁹

Myth #3: The North Vietnamese (Communists) won, ultimately, because they occupied the moral high ground. They were fighting for their homeland against a foreign invader.

Response: There was no triumph for the Vietnamese "people" in the U.S. abandonment of Vietnam. A dark shadow of death soon descended on Southeast Asia and Communist auto-genocide (or "democide," to use the term coined by Professor R.J. Rummel) wiped out millions of lives in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia and caused recurring floods of refugees not seen since the times of the Mongol invasions.

Talk of "moral high ground" in the same sentence with the butchers of Hanoi is abhorrent. Whatever injustices may have been inflicted on Vietnam by French colonialism or U.S.-supported governments in Saigon, they cannot begin to compare with the tyranny, torture, and democide inflicted on the people of Vietnam (both North and South) following "liberation." The Communist oppression and genocide began long before the U.S. became militarily involved in Vietnam.

In his pathbreaking 1994 study *Death by Government*, Professor R.J. Rummel notes that "thousands among the most educated and brightest Vietnamese were wiped out in the years 1945 to 1947 that it took the communists to firmly establish their power."³⁰

In 1953 the Communist Viet Minh (as they were then known) launched two of their murderous "land reform" programs in North Vietnam, the so-called "sky-splitting and earth-shaking" mass campaigns. "A particularly shocking device of these two savage campaigns," notes Professor Rummel, "was murder by quota."³¹ The Communist Party Politburo ordered that "5 percent of the folk in each village and hamlet had to be eliminated: five in a village of 100, twenty-five in a village of 500 and fifty in a village of 1,000." Rummel cites estimates of the murder toll for these campaigns alone as somewhere between 15,000 to 500,000.³² All told, says Rummel, between 1953 and 1956 the Communists likely killed 195,000 to 865,000 North Vietnamese. These were



Glorified tyrant: Promoted by the liberal-left in America as an ardent nationalist and freedom fighter, Ho Chi Minh was, in reality, a lifelong Communist and mass-murderer.

noncombatant men, women and children.³³ That can hardly be considered winning by occupying the "moral high ground."

In 1956, high Communist official Nguyen Manh Tuong admitted that "while destroying the landowning class, we condemned numberless old people and children to a horrible death."³⁴

This same genocidal pattern became the Communists' standard operating procedure in the South also. This was unequivocally demonstrated by the Hue Massacre. In addition to reporting the exact reverse of the actual military outcome of the Tet Offensive, the liberal media covered up another very important part of the story: the massive atrocities committed by the Communists in the city of Hue during Tet.

When the Reds were driven out of Hue 26 days later, thousands of people were missing. A series of mass graves was discovered containing the bodies of 2,750 missing civilians who had been shot, clubbed to death, or buried alive. An equal number remained missing, presumed to be abducted or executed. According to the 1972 U.S. Senate Internal Security Subcommittee report entitled *The Human Cost of Communism in Vietnam*, "the killings were in no sense random, but were carried out on the basis of explicit directives and from prepared lists of names, the Communists moving through the streets methodically with their clipboards and pulling the victims from their houses."³⁵

Hue presaged the mass murders that would follow, should Southeast Asia fall to the Communists. But for years the liberal-left media voices had been ridiculing as paranoid all warnings of the Red bloodbath to come. The reality of Hue was a devastating blow to their smug assurances, so they covered it up.

The above-mentioned Senate report presented the testimony of several top Vietnam scholars concerning the massive bloodletting that could be expected with a Hanoi victory. Among those who predicted a wave of bloody executions were Communist defectors who knew from personal experience the terror campaigns they and their comrades had perpetrated in the North. Colonel Tran Van Duc, a North Vietnamese officer for 24 years, predicted, on the basis of his experience, that the Communists would slaughter up to 3,000,000 South Vietnamese.³⁶

Another colonel, Le Xuan Chuyen, a highly decorated North Vietnamese "hero" who defected after 21 years of membership in the Communist Party, asserted that 5,000,000 people in South Vietnam were on the Communists' "blood debt" lists; that 10 to 15 percent of these would pay with their lives; that another 40 percent would be imprisoned; and that the rest would have to undergo "thought reform."³⁷

The Senate report noted:

By and large, the Western world knows only of a few of the more massive and gruesome terrorist incidents — like the massacre which took place in the Montagnard Village of Dak Son in December 1967, when the Vietcong, attacking with flame-throwers, moved from hut to hut, incinerating alive more than 250 villagers, two-thirds of them women and children. In addition, 200 Dak Son villagers were kidnapped, never to be heard of again. But the thousands of small incidents of terror — equally merciless, equally gruesome, and which account for far more victims than the big incidents — with exceedingly rare exceptions, go unreported.

It did not make the press, for example, when on October 27, 1969, the Communists booby-trapped the body of a People's Self-Defense Force member whom they had killed — so that when relatives came to retrieve the body, four of them were killed in the explosion. Nor did it make the press in May 1967 when Dr. Tran Van Lu-y told the World Health Organization in Geneva that over the previous ten years Communist terrorists had destroyed 174 dispensaries, maternity homes and hospitals; had mined or machine-gunned 40 ambulances; and had killed or kidnapped 211 members of his staff.³⁸

The Senate report concluded that the Communists could with certainty be depended on to follow past precedents and carry out a program of ruthless repression and liquidation. Senator James O. Eastland, chairman of the subcommittee, said: "The facts are in, the record is clear, the auguries of things that may come to pass are delineated with frightening clarity."³⁹ Tragically, the prophecies of Senator Eastland and the other "Cassandras" proved to be very accurate. According to Professor Rummel's study, "Hanoi is probably responsible for the murder of almost 1,700,000 people, nearly 1,100,000 of them Vietnamese. The figure might even be close to a high of 3,700,000 dead, with Vietnamese around a likely 2,800,000 of them."⁴⁰

Myth #4: The Vietnamese who fought against us were more nationalists than Communists. However, the Communists were willing to help them free their country from the French - and later, American - invaders.

Response: Nguyen Huu Tho, the founder of the National Liberation Front (the Vietcong's political arm), was presented to Americans for many years as a liberal attorney, a "nationalist," without any connections to Hanoi or Communism.⁴¹ The NLF, however, was connected to Hanoi all the while, as if by an umbilical cord. Emboldened by the phased U.S.

withdrawal, Tho and the NLF began wearing their Red colors more openly. In a 1973 visit to Moscow, Tho acknowledged the NLF's dependence on the Soviet bloc and Communist Parties throughout the world, stating:

Victories were won in the first place by the resolute and energetic struggle of our own people ... by the effective aid of the socialist countries, and by the efforts of the world's progressive and peaceful people including those in the United States.⁴²



Betraying allies and POWs: U.S. presidential advisor Henry Kissinger and Hanoi's Le Duc Tho smile broadly at the Paris "peace summit" in January 1973. Their agreement, which Kissinger claimed would bring "peace with honor," consigned millions of Vietnamese, Laotians, and Cambodians to slaughter and brutal oppression, and left hundreds of American POWs to rot in Communist prisons.

entitled *Vietnam, A Television History* in 1984, Archimedes Patti was one of the "stars" of the production. Patti stated: "Ho Chi Minh was on a silver platter in 1945. We had him. He was leaning not towards the Soviet Union; at the time he told me that the USSR could not assist him, because they just won a war only by dint of real heroism, and they were in no position to help anyone. So really, we had Ho Chi Minh, we had the Viet Minh, we had the Indochina question in our hand."⁴⁵

It was the same pro-Communist disinformation that Patti and other old OSS hands had been retailing for years. The fact is that by 1945, Ho Chi Minh (the best known alias of the man born as Nguyen tat Thanh, in 1890) had already been a committed Communist for two and a half decades. In 1920, he was a founding member of the French Communist Party. In 1922, he was off to Moscow. In 1924, his Kremlin masters sent him to China as translator and assistant to Mikhail Borodin, the Soviets' top agent in the Far East. In China, Ho recruited Vietnamese youth for training under Soviet instructors at the Whampoa Military Academy. Over the next 20 years, Ho helped spread the Communist revolution throughout Asia, traveling to Burma, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Macau, Bangkok, and elsewhere. Authorities throughout the region knew of Ho's criminal and subversive record.⁴⁶

During World War II, Ho and his Communist superiors began fabricating the myth that Ho was a great nationalist ally of the Americans against the Japanese. There is no evidence that he fought the Japanese at all, but abundant evidence that he collaborated with the Japanese, selling out genuine Vietnamese nationalists to the Japanese and the French for gold. This served not only to enrich his coffers but also to eliminate the competition. The American OSS showered him with money, arms, food, equipment, and information even though the agency knew he would use it against the French, our WWII allies. The OSS, like the CIA which followed, was filled with dupes, leftists, socialists, and even Communists,

Once South Vietnam was firmly in Hanoi's grasp, Nguyen Khac-Vien, a leading Communist Party historian in North Vietnam, admitted that the NLF "was always simply a group emanating from [Hanoi]. If we [Hanoi] had pretended otherwise for such a long period, it was only because during the war we were not obliged to unveil our cards."⁴³

Tho and his fellow NLF revolutionaries soon learned that the Communist leaders from Hanoi had no intention of sharing power with their southern "comrades." Backed up by North Vietnam's Soviet- and Red Chinese-supplied army, the Party leaders from Hanoi took control; those NLF leaders who weren't sent to "re-education" camps served as mere window dressing for the regime. Dr. Duong Quynh Hoa joined the Communist Party while studying medicine in France and was one of the founders of the NLF. She was named deputy minister of health under the new Hanoi government. However, in the late 1970s, as the Communist tyranny grew more oppressive and brutal, she resigned. She risked serious reprisals by writing in a letter to Nguyen Huu Tho: "You and I have been scarecrows, masks, or some sort of cheap and flamboyant jewelry. We simply cannot serve a regime that is not democratic and respects no laws. So I want to let you know I will resign from the Party and any positions in the government."⁴⁴

A corollary of this myth is that North Vietnamese dictator Ho Chi Minh was an ardent nationalist and only accepted Soviet and Communist Chinese assistance because the United States refused to help him fight the French colonialists.

This is the thesis propounded by, among others, Archimedes Patti, who as a young officer in the OSS (forerunner to the CIA) in the 1940s, was a big booster of Ho. Major Patti remained an ardent fan of "Uncle Ho" decades later. When PBS released its multi-million-dollar, taxpayer-funded propaganda monstrosity

and Ho was to their liking. With OSS hands like General Philip Gallagher, Colonel Edward Lansdale, George Sheldon, Major Archimedes Patti, and Major William Stevens helping him from one side, and Stalin helping from the other, Ho was in a very strong position to take on the French, who were weakened from the war and were undermined at every turn by the same pro-Communist forces in our State Department and the OSS who were at that very time preparing China for turnover to Mao Zedong.⁴⁷

Myth #5: Claims by conservatives and the military that media coverage of the Vietnam War was unbalanced, hostile toward the military, or even anti-patriotic and subversive are not substantiated by the facts. Many scholarly studies have shown that the media coverage, on the whole, was fair and accurate.

Response: We are familiar with some of these studies, which are invariably whitewashes written by fellow leftists, or by even the very reporters who did the malicious and damaging coverage during the war. A few of the leftist media denizens of the Vietnam War era have come clean, admitting what is obvious to any objective observer, that they engaged in propaganda and subversion disguised as news. One of the most refreshing and candid confessions came from Jean Lacouture, ultra-leftist reporter for the major French paper *Le Monde*, who admitted that he was ashamed "for having contributed to the installation of one of the most repressive regimes history has ever known." Lacouture, whose articles on Vietnam appeared in many major U.S. papers and magazines, said that he and other reporters on Vietnam had operated as "intermediaries for a lying and criminal propaganda - ingenuous spokesmen for tyranny in the name of liberty." "During the war," he said, "I conducted myself as a militant, sympathetic to their cause and concealed the Stalinist aspect of their system, of which I was well aware."⁴⁸

British writer William Shawcross, whose articles have appeared in *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Rolling Stone*, the *Washington Post*, and other major media organs, has expressed remorse. At a 1983 "Vietnam Reconsidered" conference held at the University of Southern California, Shawcross reportedly "delivered a moving and eloquent confession of the miscalculations that he and others like him had made about what would happen to Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia after the communists took over.

He said they never dreamed that postwar Vietnam would maintain the fourth largest army in the world, that it would invade neighboring Cambodia with nearly 200,000 troops, that it would create such harsh conditions that hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese would risk their lives and flee their homeland on small boats. He didn't anticipate that two or three million gentle Cambodians would perish as a result of the cruel, inhuman rule of the Khmer Rouge, and he recalled how the correspondents in Cambodia had mocked those in the American embassy who warned them that a communist victory would produce a horrible bloodbath. They didn't know that North Vietnam would overrun the South, unceremoniously dump the Vietcong leadership, and send tens of thousands to prison and to concentration camps."⁴⁹

Most of the media mavens of the left, though, have expressed nary a *mea culpa* for the devastation and genocide they helped fasten on the peoples of Southeast Asia. Stanley Karnow, a leftist reporter for *Time-Life* and other news organizations, who once described Ho Chi Minh as "an awful sweet guy," was selected by PBS to head its 13-part farrago of distortions and disinformation, *Vietnam, A Television History*.⁵⁰

General Ray Davis has noted: "When my audiences tell me that this was not a popular war, well, I don't think that any war can be popular. It certainly wasn't in World War II, it wasn't popular to many people – the fanfare blew them into it.... And I wonder if we could have survived Korea.... I wonder if we could have survived as far as we did if we had the television cameras taking the pictures that they wanted to take and putting them in our living rooms at home. The distorted pictures that they wanted would have ruined us the way they did in Vietnam. In fact, I told some of the news people out there that this is the first war where we had no censorship and it ruined us. They totally failed, the news totally failed."⁵¹

Failed, yes, from the viewpoint of most Americans. But from the viewpoint of many media leftists - who, unlike Jean Lacouture, have not recanted - they succeeded wildly. They *wanted* an American defeat and a Communist victory.

Besides the big, splashy propaganda and disinformation stories like My Lai, Cam Ne, and Tet that so greatly affected public opinion, there was the constant flood of daily stories, photos, editorials, and commentaries - about both the war in Indochina and the anti-war protests at home - that cumulatively demoralized the nation.

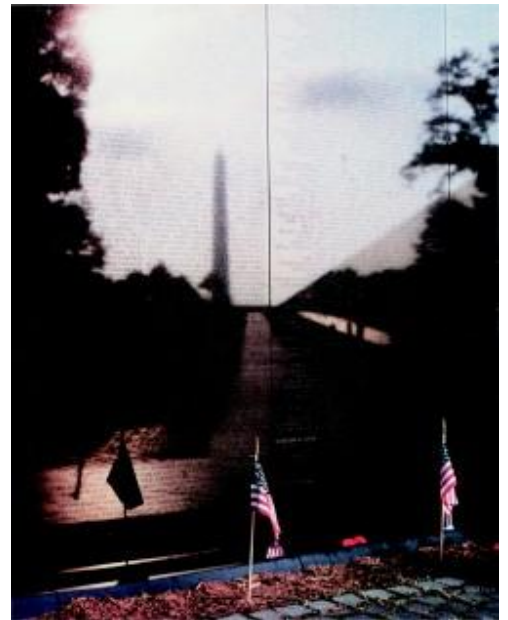
Consider, for example, the following excerpt from a review by the *New York Times'* Renata Adler of John Wayne's 1968 Vietnam War movie, *The Green Berets*. Ms. Adler saw the film and came unglued; she savaged the picture:

"The Green Berets" is a film so unspeakable, so stupid, so rotten and false in every detail that it passes through being fun, through being funny, through being camp, through everything and becomes an invitation to grieve.... Simplicities of the right, simplicities of the left, but this one is beyond the possible. It is vile and insane. On top of that it is dull.⁵²

Unspeakable? Rotten? Vile? Insane? Ms. Adler's seething rant tells us far more about her and the *Times* than it does about the patriotic movie she found so irredeemably detestable. Unfortunately, voices like hers were all too prevalent in the media choir during the war. It was voices like Adler's that Nguyen Huu Tho, the Communist founder of the NLF, was referring to when he gave due credit for the Communist victory to the broadcast and print journalists, "including those in the United States who have given moral and political aid to our just struggles."⁵³

While many of these journalists were liberal-left dupes and quasi-Marxist sympathizers, probably relatively few were actually under Communist Party discipline. Some Establishment "journalists," though, were indeed hard-core Communist Party propagandists. The most successful (that we know of) was Wilfred Burchett, a Soviet KGB agent whose influence reached far beyond the propaganda and disinformation he fed the American public through his own articles for the Associated Press, *Time*, *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Harpers*, *Newsweek*, *Chicago Tribune*, and other news outlets.⁵⁴

Mr. Burchett, an Australian, was not some misguided idealist; in 1952 he participated as a member of Communist Chinese/North Korean interrogation teams that were brutally extracting false germ-warfare confessions from captured U.S. airmen in Korea. Even after he was identified in court by POWs whom he had tortured and was identified in U.S. Senate hearings by the Soviet agent who had recruited him, Burchett continued in good graces with his media friends. When the *New York Times*' Harrison Salisbury was allowed behind enemy lines to report on the Vietnam War, it was Burchett who arranged the deal and accompanied him to North Vietnam as his guide. Salisbury wrote the introduction to one of Burchett's books which was published by the *Times*. In 1971, while in the United States as a United Nations correspondent on a restricted visa, Burchett illegally visited Washington, D.C., at the instigation of then-Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to discuss with Kissinger the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam.⁵⁵



Wall of honor: Their names are engraved on the black granite of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. — as well as on the hearts of those who love them. They are the 58,226 Americans who paid the supreme sacrifice in the service of their country in Southeast Asia.

Myth #6: It was America's pathological anti-Communist obsession that caused our leaders to get us involved in the Vietnam quagmire.

Response: American political leaders did indeed repeatedly cite the threat of Communism and use anti-Communist rhetoric, first, to get us involved militarily in Vietnam and, later, as an excuse massively to expand our involvement there. However, these same leaders, both Democrat and Republican, had done the same thing in Korea and elsewhere with no intention whatsoever of genuinely opposing Communism. In fact, while allegedly fighting the Communists in Vietnam, the internationalists in the Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations continually supported policies that favored Communist takeovers and expansion in virtually every area of the world. At the same time, they guaranteed that all of our efforts in Vietnam would be futile. It was a continuation of the brutal Yalta betrayal whereby Alger Hiss and other subversives in the Roosevelt administration handed China and Eastern Europe to Stalin.

Our eventual "defeat" in Vietnam was pre-cast decades before our final pull-out, when President Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles handed the Communists everything they wanted at the 1954 Geneva Summit. "At Geneva," *Time* magazine said, "the Communists got precisely what they sought; a vast slice of Indochina [i.e., North Vietnam], and a stance from which to take the rest, plus formal recognition of their military conquests and time to do their further will."⁵⁶

The truth is that Communist North Vietnam would have folded under its own weight if not for continuous, massive transfusions of arms, fuel, food, and supplies of every kind from the Communist world. And even more important to this equation is that Russia, China, and their satellites couldn't have provided those critical supplies to North Vietnam except for the massive aid and trade given to Moscow and Beijing by the United States.

Major General Ray Davis recalls that he got in trouble for telling a reporter in Vietnam: "It makes me sick to sit on this hill and watch those 1,000 trucks go down these roads in Laos, hauling ammunition down South to kill Americans with."⁵⁷ Not only was Gen. Davis prevented from attacking those trucks, he was supposed to pretend he didn't see them, as well as pretend that he didn't know the consequences of allowing them to deliver their deadly cargo. And he sure as heck wasn't supposed to express his anger over the treachery and betrayal that produced such policies.

Gen. Davis would have been even sicker and more furious had he known that those trucks in the massive enemy convoy, as well as the arms, munitions and supplies in them, were being provided courtesy of the same country providing *his* arms, munitions, and supplies.

In 1973, Professor Antony C. Sutton's meticulously researched and documented study, *National Suicide: Military Aid to the Soviet Union*, proved that this was precisely the case. Sutton stated:

When all the rhetoric about "peaceful trade" is boiled out, it comes down to a single inescapable fact - the guns, the ammunition, the weapons, the transportation systems that killed Americans in Vietnam came from the American-subsidized economy of the Soviet Union. The trucks that carried these weapons down the Ho Chi Minh trail came from American-built plants. The ships that carried the supplies to Sihanoukville and Haiphong came from NATO allies and used propulsion systems that our State Department could have kept out of Soviet hands....

Whichever way we cut the cake, there is only one logical and inescapable conclusion: The technical capability to wage the Korean and Vietnamese wars originated on both sides in Western, mainly American, technology, and the political illusion of "peaceful trade" was the carrier for this war-making technology.⁵⁸

"The 100,000 Americans killed in Korea and Vietnam," noted Dr. Sutton, "were killed by our own technology."⁵⁹ Sutton hoped that the Republican Party would use this dramatic information to reverse the treasonous policies helping our enemies kill our soldiers. But the Nixon administration wasn't interested. In fact, the aid-and-trade advocates on the Kennedy-Johnson teams had been replaced by equally avid aid-and-trade advocates on the Nixon-Ford teams. The key players in the Democrat-Republican cabinet shuffle were members of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), the principal nexus of organized effort for détente, East-West trade, U.S.-Russian convergence, and world government. Robert McNamara, Dean Rusk, C. Douglas Dillon, George Ball, and W. Averell Harriman (all CFR) were replaced by Melvin Laird, Henry Kissinger, David Kennedy, Elliot Richardson and Philip Habib (all CFR). Under the new Nixon CFR team, aid and trade with Russia, China, and all the Communist countries *accelerated*, even as the terror and genocide swept over Southeast Asia. As long as we had unconscionable officials running the government determined to supply the enemy while placing dangerous and absurd restrictions on our side, the Vietnam War was certain to continue as a "no-win" war. That, tragically, is exactly what happened.

Myth # 7: All of America's POWs were returned following the 1973 peace agreement, and Vietnam is now cooperating to find the remains of all the unresolved MIAs.

Response: President Clinton announced on February 3, 1994 that he was lifting the U.S. trade embargo on Vietnam, which had then been in effect for 19 years. He was "absolutely convinced," he said, that renewing economic relations with Vietnam is the best way to resolve the fates of the 2,238 U.S. servicemen still listed as missing in that war.⁶⁰ Seventy former U.S. POWs from the Vietnam War - including Representative Sam Johnson of Texas; Admiral James Stockdale, USN (Ret.); Brigadier General Robinson Risner, USAF (Ret.); and Captain Eugene "Red" McDaniel, USN (Ret.) - sent a letter to the president expressing their strong opposition to lifting the trade embargo against Hanoi. These former POWs urged Clinton "in the strongest possible terms, not to take further steps to restore economic or diplomatic relations with Hanoi until you certify that the Communist government there is fully forthcoming in telling us what they know about our fellow POWs and MIAs who did not make it home with us in 1973."⁶¹

An October 1990 minority report of the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations revealed that the Defense Intelligence Agency had "authoritatively concluded as late as April 1974 that several hundred living POW/MIAs were still held captive in South East Asia." Entitled *Interim Report on the Southeast Asian POW/MIA Issue*, the study stated:

Although the Pathet Lao declared on April 3, 1973 that Laotian Communist forces were holding American POWs and were prepared to give an accounting, nine days later a DOD spokesman declared that there were no more American prisoners anywhere in Southeast Asia. No POWs held by the Laotian Communist forces ever returned. The evidence indicates that the U.S. Government made a decision to abandon U.S. citizens still in the custody of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, at the conclusion of U.S. involvement in the Second Indochina War.⁶²

Henry Kissinger and Winston Lord (both top CFR men) represented the United States at the Paris "peace accords." They negotiated the brutal betrayal labeled "peace with honor" that required abandoning our POW/MIAs, including some who were "live sightings." Republican and Democratic administrations since have gone to extreme lengths to cover up evidence that would reignite this issue.

"There are those in Congress who are urging you to lift the embargo as a means to get more information," the former POWs wrote in their letter to Clinton. "Mr. President, such a recommendation is nothing but a submission to blackmail by Hanoi."

The former POWs have been proven right; Hanoi has been showered with hundreds of millions of dollars and has produced little of substance to resolve the outstanding POW/MIA cases.

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